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ABSTRACT

The effects of family background factors on the mobility aspirations of 70 black and white Chicago, Illinois male adolescents were investigated. Data on family socioeconomic status, family structure, parent aspirations for the son and parent-child relationships were obtained by interviewing the father, mother, and son in each family. Results indicate that although levels of aspiration do not differ by race, the determinants of these aspirations do. Among black adolescents, the mother was the most influential in the determination of aspirational levels, while among the whites it was the father. This finding is not to be construed as a negation of the other parent's role, however, since in both cases the overall parent effect on son's aspiration was positive. Parent aspirations for the son explains nearly half the variance in adolescent aspiration for both races. (Author/AM)

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The Family Antecedents of Adolescent Mobility Aspirations

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A paper prepared for presentation at the Third Annual Conference on the Black Family: Black Youth, Louisville, Kentucky, March 4-6.

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Introduction

Social scientists have devoted massive amounts of time and resources to the investigation of status attainment processes. Typically, these investigations represent attempts to explain educational and occupational attainment in terms of selected structural and psychological variables. While the analytic models deriving from this research have proven reasonably effective for explaining patterns of status attainment among Whites, these models have been significantly less successful when applied to Blacks. This paper attempts to expand our knowledge of race-differences in status attainment processes by focusing upon mobility aspirations and their development. In this paper the term mobility aspirations refers to an individual's educational and occupational attainment expectations. Mobility aspirations are important variables in the status attainment process because the <u>expectation</u> of high status attainment represents a logical precondition to the development of attitudes and behaviors essential for the <u>actual</u> attainment of desired statuses. Miller and Hailer's (1964) conclusion after a longitudinal study of a cohort of high school students that stated aspirations were the most accurate single predictors of eventual educational and occupational attainment, demonstrates that mobility aspirations represent valid constructs for the study of race-differences in status attainment processes.

Various theoretical models of occupational and educational status attainment processes have been proposed (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Duncan

et al., 1968; Sewell et al., 1969, 1970; Featherman, 1972). Of these, none have proven equally adept at accounting for variations in attainment processes across class, race and sex lines. Past experience shows these "status attainment" models to be most effective when applied to White, middle-class, male populations (Thomas, 1975). Traditional status attainment models are of limited relevance to Blacks because of their near exclusive focus upon socioeconomic status and other structural variables. Too little attention is paid factors in an individual's interpersonal environment which might serve to mediate the effects of structural variables upon his attitudes and behaviors. While previous research shows that social psychological factors are not significantly related to the status attainment process among Whites, that research also suggests that status attainment processes among Blacks are very much determined by the nature of their interpersonal experiences (Porter, 1974; Thomas, 1975). If we are to understand status attainment among Blacks therefore, we must look beyond structural elements to interpersonal elements in their situations. In particular, attention needs to be directed to interactions within the family, since the family represents one of the more important interactional settings.

Research Model

This research focuses on the set of variable relationships depicted in the "Family Antecedents of Adolescent Mobility Aspirations Model" (see Figure 1). Elaborated briefly, this theoretical model assumes that parental aspirations for the son have their origins in the immediate social context (i.e., family socioeconomic status, and family

structure/composition) and that the kinds of goals or aspirations which a parent holds for her (or his) son in turn act to determine the modes of behavior (i.e., childrearing practices, interpersonal interaction, etc.) which (s)he adopts in relation to the child. Finally, it is assumed that the son's mobility aspirations are products of parental behaviors in relation to the child. This research, then, intends to contribute to the extension of status attainment models for Blacks by considering an important correlate of attainment, mobility aspirations, in relation to family antecedents.

-- Figure 1 here --

Sample

The population for the study was 41 White and 29 Black Chicago adolescents aged 14-18 and their parents. Interviews of approximately 2 hours in length were administered to the father, mother and son in each family. Although adapted to the subject being interviewed in some minor ways, the parent and son interviews were substantively equivalent.

Measurement of Mobility Aspirations

In this study, adolescent mobility aspirations are measured by an additive, composite index of adolescent educational and occupational attainment expectations. The first component of that composite measure, adolescent educational expectations, was measured by a question which asked the adolescent:

Considering your abilities, grades, financial situation and so on, how far do you actually expect to go in school?

	Score
Some high school	1
Graduate from high school	2
Trade or vocational school after high school	3
Some college	4
Graduate from college	5
Go past first 4 years of college to get an M.A. or Ph.D. or to go to professional school and become a doctor or a lawyer	6

The second component of the composite measure of mobility aspirations, adolescent occupational expectations, was measured by asking the adolescent:

Considering your abilities, financial situation and so on, what occupation or type of occuption do you think you will actually go into once you are older?

The adolescents' responses to this question were then assigned Duncan scores and grouped into six occupational prestige categories as follows:

Level	Score
ONE (Janitor, steelworker, taxi-driver, housekeeper)	1
TWO (Auto mechanic, tailor, bus driver, welder)	2
THREE (Electrician, machinist, plumber, painter)	3
FOUR (Secretary, Clergyman, Nurse, Salesman)	4
FIVE (Accountant, High School Teacher, Draftsman, Office Manager)	5
SIX (Chemical engineer, lawyer, doctor, college professor)	6

Race and Mobility Aspirations

Relatively few comparisons of Black-White mobility aspirations have appeared in the literature, instead, researchers have tended to make socioeconomic status comparisons. Where comparisons between race groups have been made, the findings were either inconclusive or contradictory. For example, Bachman (1970:186) presented strong evidence to the effect that Black adolescents do not differ significantly from White adolescents in their levels of educational and occupational aspirations. In fact, Bachman found that when background factors were controlled, the aspirations of Black youths were consistently higher than those of White youths. Gordon (1972:47-51) contradicted Bachman in that he found Black occupational aspirations to be significantly lower than those of Whites. Paradoxically, Gordon agreed with Bachman in the case of educational aspirations, since he also concluded that Blacks had higher levels of educational aspirations than Whites. In this study, race failed to be a significant predictor of mobility aspirations ($r = .07$). During this analysis, however, race will be treated as a contextual variable, i.e., separate analysis of racial groups, in order to ascertain how determinants of mobility aspirations vary in their consequences because of unmeasured race effects.

Family Socioeconomic Status and Mobility Aspirations

Sewell (1967:559) has remarked that "It is a sociological truism evidenced by a number of studies that children of higher social class origins are more likely to aspire to high educational and occupational

goals than are children of lower social class origins." Middle-class and working-class youth may be expected to have different orientations toward status mobility because of basic differences in their respective social class settings. Middle-class adolescents are reared in environments rich in the material and spiritual resources which are most facilitative of high mobility aspirations, while lower-class adolescents are reared in environments which though often rich in the necessary spiritual resources, are generally deficient in the material resources necessary for the development and realization of high mobility aspirations. Family socioeconomic status and the contextual setting which it defines for the adolescent thus becomes a logical predeterminant of adolescent mobility aspirations.

Family socioeconomic status is measured by the following family characteristics: (1) father's level of educational attainment, (2) mother's level of educational attainment, (3) father's level of occupational status, (4) mother's level of occupational status and (5) family level of annual income.

Parental Level of Educational Attainment

The level of educational attainment of both the father and the mother is measured by the following question:

How many years of school did you complete?

	Score
Less than 8 years	1
Some high school but didn't graduate	2
Graduated from high school	3
Some college, but didn't graduate	4
Graduated from college	5

	Score
Went past 4 years of college to get an M.A. or Ph.D. or went to professional school to become a doctor or a lawyer	6

Parental Level of Occupational Status

The occupational status level of parents was measured by the following questions:

What kind of work do (did) you do? What is your occupation? The occupations which the parents reported were then coded using the Duncan (1961) socioeconomic index of occupations. For readers unfamiliar with this index, the index assigns prestige ratings to occupations along an interval scale ranging from 1 to 100. Parents' reported occupations were scored with Duncan scores and collapsed to form the following six occupation categories. Those occupations listed within parentheses are illustrative of the occupations included in each category:

Level	Score
ONE (Janitor, steelworker, taxi-driver, housekeeper)	1
TWO (Auto mechanic, tailor, bus driver, welder).	2
THREE (Electrician, machinist, plumber, painter)	3
FOUR (Secretary, clergyman, nurse, salesman)	4
FIVE (Accountant, high school teacher, draftsman, office manager)	5
SIX (Chemical engineer, lawyer, doctor, college professor).	6

Annual Family Income

Annual family income was measured by asking the parent to report the family's gross income for the year 1973 in terms of six categories.

	Score
Below $5,000 for the year	1
$5,000-$9,000 for the year	2
$9,001-$15,000 for the year	3
$15,001-$18,000 for the year	4
$18,001-$24,000 for the year	5
Over $24,000 for the year	6

Multiple regression will be the statistical technique utilized here to investigate multivariate relationships. Essentially, regression analysis provides a way of simultaneously relating a particular variable to a whole series of other variables assumed to affect it. Regression analysis supplies two major items of information which will be of interest here, the coefficient of determination and standardized regression coefficients. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable which is "explained" by association with a group of explanatory variables. While standardized regression coefficients (β), or "beta weights," may be interpreted as measures of the relative contribution made by a particular explanatory variable--with all other explanatory variables held constant--to variation in the variable under study.

The results of regression adolescent mobility aspirations upon the five indicators of family socioeconomic status indicate that among Black adolescents, mother's level of educational attainment is the variable

most strongly correlated with mobility aspirations (β = .687*). Among White adolescents, family income was the strongest correlate of mobility aspirations (β = .846*). Mobility aspirations among Blacks were negatively related to father's level of educational and occupational attainment (β = -.560, -.421), while for Whites, mobility aspirations were negatively related to the mother's level of educational and occupational attainment (β = -.310, -.657*). For Black adolescents, high maternal status attainment seems most facilitative of high mobility aspirations, while for White adolescents it is high paternal status attainment. A tentative explanation for this finding has to do with the types of status discrepancies found to exist between parents in the sample. In Black families, a larger percentage of mothers than fathers were employed in "white collar" occupations (level 4 or better), while in White families just the opposite was true. The coefficent of determination for the white group indicates that family socioeconomic status explains a significant proportion of the variance in mobility aspirations (R^2 = .537*); while R^2 for the Black group indicates that these variables explain a sizeable though not significant proportion of the variance in mobility aspirations (R^2 = .332). Family socioeconomic status therefore seems to be more predictive of mobility aspirations among whites than among Blacks.

Family Structure and Mobility Aspirations

Family size, order of birth and parent control of son's decision-making are aspects of family structure which have been shown to be relevant to the development of mobility aspirations among adolescents. Family size may be expected to influence mobility aspirations in

numerous ways. For instance, the larger the family, the less likely are parents to invest any sizeable percentage of family resources into educating offspring beyond high school (Elder, 1962; Rosen, 1961). Birth order is another aspect of family structure which can logically be expected to influence mobility aspirations. For birth order locates the adolescent at a certain stage in the family cycle and defines for him certain material and spiritual facts of existence. Elder (1962) and Rosen (1961) report a tendency for first, last and only born children to exhibit levels of achievement orientations and aspirations which exceed those of children occupying other birth positions in the family. The authority relationships which an adolescent maintains with his parents must also influence, to some degree, his level of mobility aspirations. To the extent that the adolescent perceives himself as a powerful individual in decisionmaking relationships involving parents, he can also be expected to exhibit a more positive attitude in terms of his aspirations for the future. Strodtbeck (1958) found that sons having "democratic" authority relationships with their parents were more oriented toward high achievement than sons having "autocratic" authority relationships with their parents while Rehberg (1970) concludes that "a participative, 'democratic' type of parental authority is more conducive to high educational goals than a nonparticipative or 'autocratic' type of authority."

A question in the parent interview schedule was the measure of family size and adolescent ordinal birth position. This question asked the parent to list the children in the family by name and supply the sexes and birth dates of each; the children listed by the parent were enumerated and family size was coded as follows:

Size of Family	Score
1-2 children	1
3-4 children	2
5-6 children	3
7-9 children	4
Over 10 children	5

Adolescent ordinal position within the family birth sequence was deduced from the information provided and coded as follows:

Birth Position	Score
First, last or only born	1
Second or third born	2
Fourth or fifth born	3
Sixth or seventh born.	4
Eighth or higher born.	5

Parental control of parent-son authority relationships was measured by two questions in the son interview which read:

In general, how are most decisions made between you and your mother? (father?)

	Score
I can do what I want to regardless of what she (he) thinks	1
I can make my own decisions but she (he) likes for me to consider her (his) opinion	2
My opinions are as important as hers (his) in deciding what I should do	3
She (he) listens to my opinion but makes the final decision	4
She (he) decides what I should do	5

This set of family structure variables fails to explain a significant proportion of the variance in either Black or White aspirations (R^2 = .241; .169). Of more importance is the relative relationship of each individual variable to adolescent mobility aspirations. Mother control of son's decisionmaking was the strongest predictor of aspirations among Blacks (β = .543*). Family size and ordinal birth position were moderately related to mobility aspirations among Blacks (β = -.234; .164). Among Whites, family size was the strongest predictor of aspirations (β = .532*), while ordinal birth position and maternal control of son's decisionmaking were less strongly related to adolescent aspirations (β = -.345; .109). Comparison shows that as family size increases, aspirations among Whites tend to be higher, while for Blacks the reverse is true. Similarly, at later positions in the birth order, aspirations among Blacks tend to be high while those among Whites tend to be low. Maternal control of son's decisionmaking seems facilitative of high aspirations, while parental control of son's decisionmaking is detrimental to high aspirations in both races.

Parental Aspirations for the Son and Adolescent Mobility Aspirations

Prior research suggests that the types of futures which parents forsee for their children condition the manner in which they relate to them. For instance, Kahl (1953:201) noted that ". . . parents who believed in the value of 'getting ahead' started to apply pressure from the beginning of the school career." He concluded therefore that these parents' sons reached high school with higher aspirations than other working-class boys because they had been reared in the direction of parental goals which stressed high achievement. Gordon (1972) found

that parental educational aspirations for the son constituted the most potent determinant of the adolescent's own educational aspirations. In this sense, childrearing can be construed as a rational, directed enterprise in which the parent first arrives at a determination of the type of person (s)he wants the child to be and then endeavors to mold the child's personality and behaviors in the direction of this model.

Parental mobility aspirations for the son was measured by an additive, composite index of the educational and occupational attainment expectations which each parent held for the son. The measure therefore is equivalent to the above measure of adolescent mobility aspirations.

Parental aspirations for the son were found to "explain" nearly half the variance in adolescent aspirations for both races (R^2 = .472*; .401). Among Blacks, mother's aspirations for the son was the strongest correlate of adolescent aspirations for self (β = .666*). Among Whites, on the other hand, it was the father's aspirations for the son which was most strongly correlated with adolescent aspirations for self (β = .604*). The differential relationship of maternal and paternal aspirations to adolescent aspirations across races is quite pronounced; among Blacks the relationship between mother and son aspirations is strongly significant while that between father and son aspirations is very weak (β = .057). Among Whites the opposite is true; that is, father and son aspirations are significantly related while mother and son aspirations are only weakly related (β = .069). Increasing levels of maternal aspirations for the son (among Blacks) and paternal aspirations for the son (among Whites) then, are reflected in increasing aspirations of the son for self.

Parental Childrearing Practices and Mobility Aspirations

Central to this paper are the dual assumptions that parents approach childrearing with a distinct impression of the traits which they believe will be most beneficial to their children in the future and that they then endeavor to systematically instill these traits in the child. An attempt will be made here to relate parental childrearing practices to adolescent mobility aspirations; the dimensions of childrearing practices to be considered are: (1) achievement training, and (2) independence training. Achievement training refers to parental strategies which shape the child's personality and behavior in the direction of successful competition in situations where the child's performance is evaluated against an established standard of excellence (school representing the best example of such a situation). Parental encouragement of or emphasis upon college attendance is one aspect of achievement training which has been shown by numerous researchers to be strongly related to adolescent aspirations (Rehberg and Westby, 1967; Rosen and D'Andrade, 1959). Independence training refers to parental strategies intended to shape the child's personality and behaviors in the direction of self-sufficiency. In an original investigation of the effects of independence training on adolescent achievement motivation, Winterbottom (1958) concluded that achievement motivation was generally highest among those boys whose mothers demanded early indications of self-reliance. Rosen and D'Andrade (1959) also conclude that parental independence training makes significant contributions to the development of high achievement motivation in offspring.

The two aspects of parental achievement training measured in this study were parental school performance expectations and stress upon college attendance. Parental expectations of school performance was measured by asking the adolescent:

In general what do your parents consider to be satisfactory grades for you in school?

	Score
Passing grades	1
Average grades	2
Above average grades	3
Best grades in class	4

While parental stress upon college attendance by the adolescent was measured by asking the parents:

Generally over the past 3-5 years, have you stressed or emphasized that (son's name) should try to go to college?

	Score
Not stressed at all	1
Stressed it very little	2
Stressed it somewhat	3
Stressed it a lot	4

The measure of parental independence training used here asked the parent:

At about what age did you expect (son's name) to:

A. be able to bathe and dress himself?

B. know his way around the neighborhood so that he could play without getting lost?

C. be willing to try things on his own without depending on you for help?

D. be able to clean up after himself?

E. make his own friends among children his age?

The parents' responses for expected age of independent performance of the various tasks by the son were then averaged and collapsed into the following categories:

	Score
Over 7 years old	1
5.1 - 6 years old	2
3.1 - 5 years old	3
0 - 3 years old	4

The mobility aspirations of White adolescents were more strongly related to parental achievement and independence training practices than those of Black adolescents (R^2 = .414*; .322). The "beta weights" show that parental school performances expectations is the strongest correlate of aspirations among Whites (β = .382*) but the weakest correlate of aspirations among Blacks (β = .004). The two races also differ in terms of the relative effects of mother and father college attendance encouragements on adolescent aspirations. Among Blacks, maternal stress on college attendance more strongly related to adolescent aspirations than paternal stress upon college attendance (β = .290; .214). The aspirational levels of Blacks tended to be highest where paternal and maternal demands for independence were made later (β = .397*; .248), while those of whites were lowest in these instances (β = -.221; -.017). In both races, paternal independence expectations were more strongly related to son aspirations than maternal independence expectations.

Parent-Child Relationships and Adolescent Mobility Aspirations

In keeping with their "companionship" functions, modern families are expected to provide warmth and affection for progeny long after the

rudimentary child socialization tasks have been completed. For this reason the family may be viewed as an ongoing source of emotionally supportive relationships which the youngster draws upon throughout life. The manner in which parent and child relate to one another on an individualized interpersonal basis might therefore be expected to influence adolescent mobility aspirations. Within this study, three aspects of the parent-child relationship are given consideration: (1) parental approval of the son, (2) adolescent identification with the parents and (3) parent-child affective attachment. Taken together these three factors constitute a measure of the degree of warmth which characterizes the parent-child relationship. Walters and Stinnett (1971) noted that the results from over a decade of research on parent-child relationships converge in suggesting that parental accepting, warm and supportive behaviors encourage favorable intellectual development in children--and by inference, high levels of aspiration--while rejecting, cold and punitive behaviors by parents inhibit favorable intellectual development.

Parent approval of the son was measured by asking the son: How much would you say the following people approve of the kind of person that you are NOW?

Score

A. Your father:

disapproves very much 1

disapproves 2

approves. 3

approves very much 4

B. Your mother:

	Score
disapproves very much	1
disapproves	2
approves	3
approves very much	4

Adolescent identification with the parents was measured by asking the adolescent the following two questions:

Which parent do people think you are most like?

	Score
Father much more	1
Father more.	2
Mother more.	3
Mother much more	4

Which parent do you feel you have the most in common with in terms of interests and personality?

	Score
Father much more.	1
Father more	2
Mother more	3
Mother much more	4

While parent-child affective attachment was measured by asking the son the following questions:

In comparison with other teenagers and their relationship with their parents, how close do you feel you are to your parents?

	Score
Much less close than most teenagers	1
Somewhat less close than most teenagers	2
Somewhat closer than most teenagers	3
Much closer than most teenagers	4

Which parent is easier for you to talk to?

	Score
Father much more.	1
Father somewhat more.	2
Mother somewhat more.	3
Mother much more.	4

Interestingly enough, the set of parent-child relationship variables is more effective at explaining variance in mobility aspirations among Blacks than among Whites (R^2 = .330; .141). For Black moreso than White adolescents, levels of mobility aspiration tended to be low where the father's approval of the son was high (β = -.306; -.002). On the other hand, where mother's approval of the son was high, the son's level of aspirations tended to be high for both Blacks and Whites (β = .108; .289). Interpreted overall, these four "beta weights" suggest that parental approving patterns are more important factors in the determination of aspirational levels among White than Black adolescents. The "objective" measure of parental identification shows that White aspirations were higher than those of Blacks when people outside the adolescent were perceived as believing that the son resembled the mother more than the father (β = .222; .071). The more "subjective" measure of parental identification, however, shows that as the adolescent's self-perceived degree of commonality with the mother increases, aspirations among Whites tend to be lower, while aspirations among

Blacks tend to be higher (β = -.143; .179). Finally, among Black adolescents aspirations were highest where the parent-son relationship was closest, while aspirations among white adolescents were only negligibly correlated with this same variable (β = .558*; .091). Thus suggesting that although aspirations among Whites are highest where parental approval of the son is strongest, aspirations among Blacks are highest where the parent-son relationship is warmest.

Summary, Conclusions and Implications

The results of this research show the dynamics which underlie the formation of adolescent level of mobility aspirations to differ across racial lines. While Black and white adolescents are quite similar in the respect that it is the family context which is most determinative of their aspirational levels, they differ considerably in terms of those specific aspects of the family context which have the most influence on their aspirational levels. Among Black adolescents, the mother constitutes the pivotal factor in the family socialization system. It is her aspirations for the son, her level of educational attainment, her achievement training patterns and her "role model" which most determines the son's level of aspirations. This should not, of course, be interpreted as a negation of the role which the father plays in the determination of aspirations among Black adolescents. For, father's independence training patterns, approval of the son; aspirations for the son; and level of occupational attainment were all found to be substantially related to adolescent aspirations. Rather, these findings are indicative of the critical role played by maternal attitudes and behaviors during the period when adolescent mobility aspirations are being formed.

Among white adolescents in this sample, on the other hand, the father represents the most pivotal factor in the family socialization system as this pertains to the formation of mobility aspirations. It was his attitudes and behaviors in relation to the son which proved to be most predictive of adolescent aspiration levels. Repeating an earlier point, the critical role played by the father in the white household relative to the formation of adolescent aspirations should not be interpreted as a negation of the maternal role. For evidence suggests that the mother also makes a very real contribution to the determination of adolescent aspirations through her control and approval of the son as well as through her achievement training behaviors.

That basic differences underlie the dynamics of Black and White aspiration formation make it all the more interesting that no substantial racial differences existed in aspirational levels. Irrespective of the fact that they originated within fundamentally different sets of processes, the aspirations of Black and White adolescents proved to be quite comparable. Contrary to numerous popular assumptions, the cross-sex effect of the mother upon son's aspirations among Blacks was not a detrimental one. In fact, this "cross-sex effect" produced aspirational levels in Black adolescents which were slightly higher than those produced in white adolescents by a "same-sex effect." Clearly then, the notion of a central maternal figure as a hindrance to the development of high achievement motivation in sons, irrespective of race and socioeconomic status is open to question. After her study of Black families in Chicago, where she found central maternal figures in the majority of households studied, Aschenbrenner (1975:85) commented:

> It should be noted that in few societies has the role of mother been as undermined and generally held suspect as in middle-class upwardly mobile America, where a strong mother is open to claims of "Momism." In Pakistani and Indian families, mothers are strongly protective, nurturant, and held in great respect, as in many family-oriented cultures.

She contended, as does this study, that the more central role played by mothers in Black families--relative to that played by mothers in White families--serves to enhance rather than retard their children's development. It should be reiterated that this central maternal role occurs largely in conjunction with, rather than in opposition to, or in the absence of, a strong paternal role. Black mothers and fathers complement one another in the socialization of their offspring just as White mothers and fathers complement one another. That the configuration of these parental patterns of cooperation in childrearing tasks and responsibilities varies across racial lines should not be focused upon by detractors as a signal that Black families are malfunctioning, rather the focus--and judgment of functionality--should be in terms of the outcomes of this family socialization system as demonstrated by the offspring's personality and behavior. In the instance under consideration here, both Black and white families--irrespective of processual differences--were shown to produce comparable outcomes.

Today's Aspirations, Tomorrow's Attainments?

At the beginning of this paper the question of where ultimate responsibility for individual patterns of status attainment could properly be said to rest was advanced. Are personal patterns of status attainment the province of the individual or the society? Arguing

from the American credo and its traditional emphasis upon independent, assertive behavior, the expected response would be that individuals determine their own attainment histories. Evidence presented in this study, however, suggests that this answer is an incomplete one. Status attainment differentials between Black and White males in this society do not necessarily originate in a lack of inspiration on the parts of Blacks. The Black adolescents in this sample were just as committed to the goals of self-betterment and attainment as the white adolescents. Why is it then that these Black adolescents will, on the whole, fail to match the attainments of the whites in the sample?

Perhaps the answer to these predictable race differences in status attainment rests with the characterization of mobility aspirations as the initial stage in the status attainment process. Individuals who are not motivated to achieve, generally do not do so, yet, motivation in and of itself is not sufficient to ensure successful attainment. Obviously the individual must be endowed with a level of intelligence which is commensurate to his level of attainment expectations. Yet, in our society even these traits together do not constitute guarantees, for the complexity of modern society requires that individual efforts be facilitated by mechanisms outside the individual if he is to be reasonably assured of attaining his stated goals. The period of total, or near total, self-reliance is a bygone era. Individuals are now forced to rely quite heavily upon the society for assistance, therefore where access to the society's "supportitive mechanisms" is denied an individual, one sees consequence reduction in that individual's ability to achieve his objectives.

The problem confronting the American status attainment system derives then, not from the mere existence of a selective process which operates to "disqualify" aspirants, that is, to freeze their attainment at specified points in the status hierarchy. Such a process is quite valid in the context of this society and in fact inevitable. Rather the problem derives from the manner in which the dual process of selecting those who are to be upwardly mobile and those who are to stabilize (or be downwardly mobile) is accomplished. Although societal proscriptions dictate that this selective process is to be based upon merit, all too often it has its basis in ascriptive traits. Thus, one finds certain groups in the society, e.g., Blacks, the poor, females, Native Americans and other minorities, being denied the opportunity to realize their aspirations. From birth onward, persons in these groups are deprived, or severely limited in their access to the societal resources which determine group patterns of status attainment. In attempting to emphasize the importance of suportitive resources to the process of individual achievement, Ruth Gasson (1972:5) was prompted to note that: "In the case of individuals with the same level of aspiration, differences in facilitation are translated directly into different levels of attainment. . ." Consequently, it can be validly argued that to the extent that this society denies certain groups of people equal access to necessary achievement facilitators and/or supportitive resources, it also denies these people equal access to the status attainment process.

In summary, these findings suggest that much of the responsibility for traditionally low status attainment among Black adolescents lies with the larger society and its mechanisms. The Black families studied

here are functioning perfectly in accordance with societal dictates to produce a cohort of youngsters who are ready, willing and able to participate in this society to the fullest of their capabilities. What remains now is for our society to accomodate itself to this newer, more positive manifestation of "Black Power" by removing the last vestiges of a caste system which acts to impede the full and equal participation of Blacks in the American competitive structure.

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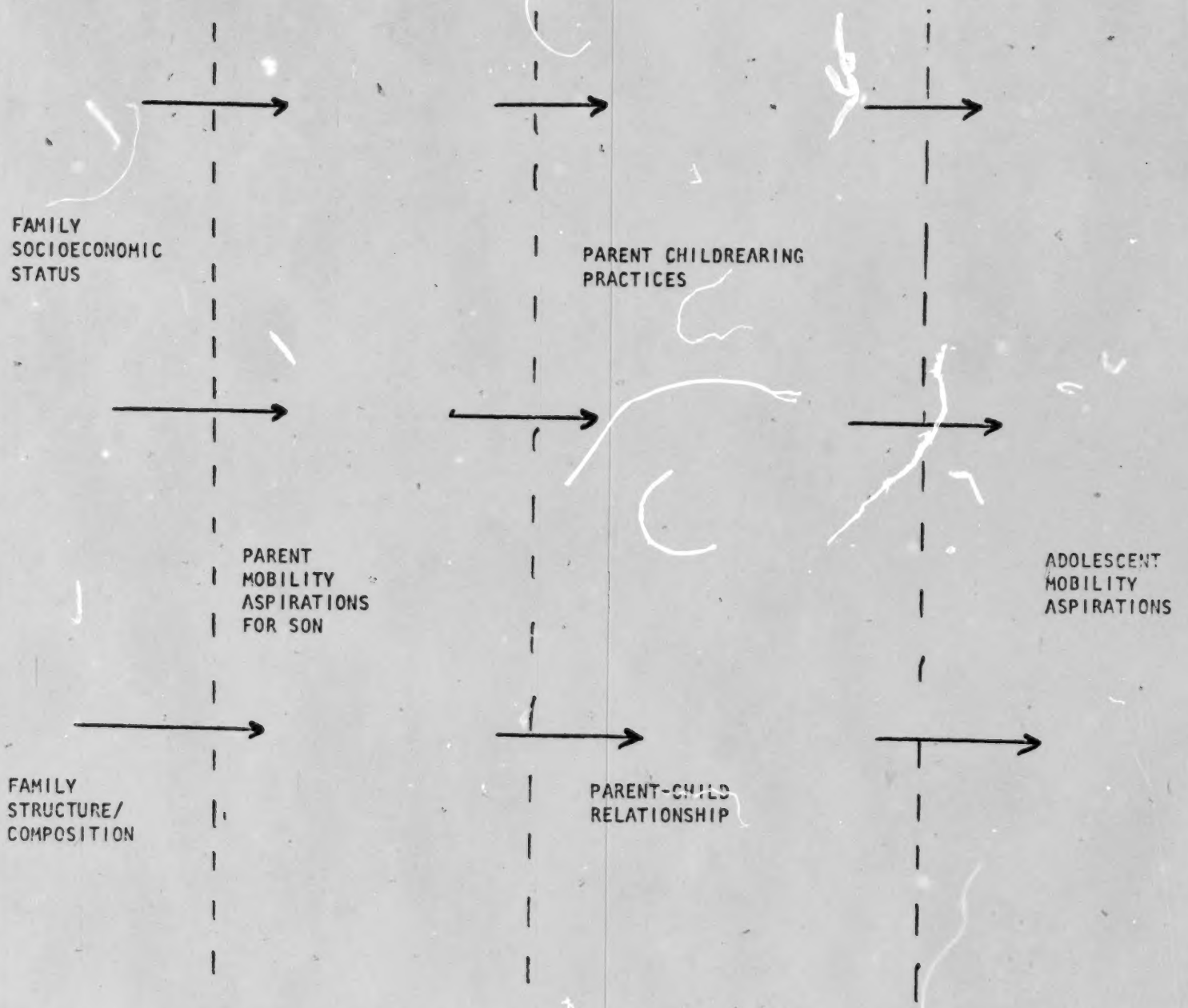

Figure 1 --"Family Antecedents of Mobility Aspirations" Model